

# THE RISE OF ADOLF HITLER

The Great Depression reached Germany in the early months of 1930. The Depression's first political victim was the government of Chancellor Herman Mueller whose coalition collapsed because of a disagreement among the coalition partners over the issue of maintaining benefits to the unemployed.

## Bruening as Chancellor

At the suggestion of the leaders of the German army, a new government was set up in March 1930 under the leadership of Heinrich Bruening. Bruening attempted to govern by using the President's emergency powers and without the support of the Reichstag. The Reich President who appointed Bruening was Field Marshal Hindenburg, the national hero of the First World War, who had been elected to the Presidency in 1925.

Bruening's government suffered a vote of no confidence from the Reichstag because of its deflationary economic policy and its rule by presidential powers. Bruening responded by dissolving the Reichstag and ordering new elections to be held on 14 September, 1930. This act weakened rather than strengthened Bruening's position because in an atmosphere of deepening crisis the moderate parties lost votes and those of the extreme left and right gained. Thus the Communists gained seats, and in an extraordinary and totally unforeseen development the National Socialist Party (the Nazis) increased its representation in the Reichstag from 12 members to 107. The Nazis became the second largest party in the Reichstag.

Bruening continued to hold on to office with the hesitant support of the Socialists and implemented his economic programme by the use of the President's emergency powers. His economic policies were so severe he was dubbed the 'Hunger Chancellor'. During this period, unemployment in Germany rose from 2 258 000 in March 1930, to 6 031 000 in March 1932.

Nevertheless Bruening managed to remain in office throughout 1931 and into 1932. He sought to win political support for his administration by achieving a

diplomatic success through negotiations with the western powers. However, his attempts to achieve a termination of reparation payments and German equality in armaments with the western powers failed. This development further undermined his political support.

## Hindenburg re-elected as President of the Republic

Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg's first seven-year term as President ended early in 1932, and, with the support of Chancellor Bruening, he succeeded in winning a second term of office. In the two stage presidential election held in March and April 1932, Hindenburg's principal opponents were the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and the Communist leader Ernst Thalmann. An indicator of the growing electoral support enjoyed by Hitler and the Nazis was that Hitler was the runner-up to Hindenburg in the election. Hitler received 13.4 million votes to Hindenburg's 19.3 million on the second ballot.

## The fall of Chancellor Bruening

By early 1932 Bruening had become alarmed by acts of political thuggery by the Nazi paramilitary organisation, the S.A. (Sturm Abteilungen), and feared a putsch. Thus on 14 April, 1932, he decreed the suppression of the S.A. He was confident that this would end the Nazi menace. However, this move did not have the support of the army. The army's spokesman, General Kurt von Schleicher, persuaded the President that the army did not support the ban on the S.A. and argued that Bruening should be replaced. At the end of May, Bruening was forced to resign as chancellor.

## The Papen government

At the suggestion of Schleicher, Hindenburg appointed Baron Franz von Papen as chancellor. Although Papen was from the Centre Party he did not possess party support in the Reichstag. Like Bruening before him, Papen moved to consolidate his position by both domestic and diplomatic action. Firstly, he attempted to break the power of the Socialists by dismissing the government of Prussia, their main stronghold. Secondly, he achieved a diplomatic success by negotiating a cessation of reparation payments with the western powers.

Despite this, the Papen government was the most unpopular of the Weimar period. At elections held in late July 1932, Papen's Reichstag base was reduced and the Nazis more than doubled their representation, gaining 230 seats. To avoid a vote of no confidence, Papen dissolved the Reichstag and scheduled new elections for November. Again the results were a blow to him with 90% of the votes clearly anti-government. A feature of the November election was the decline in the Nazi vote with the return of only 196 Nazi deputies.

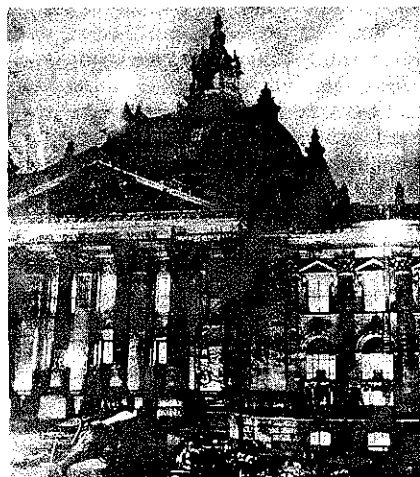
Faced with this total lack of political support Papen proposed drastic measures. He suggested to Hindenburg that the constitution be suspended, the Reichstag dissolved and that he, Papen, govern by presidential decree and army backing. When Hindenburg was informed by General Schleicher that the army did not believe that it could maintain public order if rule by decree were introduced, Hindenburg refused to back Papen's proposal and asked for his resignation. Hindenburg asked General Schleicher to form a new government and Schleicher took over as Chancellor on 2 December, 1932.

### General von Schleicher as Chancellor

General von Schleicher represented the leadership of the German army and believed that the Nazis could be used to achieve a workable government. He attempted to split the Nazi ranks and force Hitler into a coalition as a junior partner, thereby controlling him. However, Hitler managed to outmanoeuvre Schleicher and held his party together. Schleicher next attempted to win broader support for his administration in the Reichstag from parties such as the Socialists. Again he had no success. Like Papen before him, Schleicher now attempted to win Hindenburg's support for the suspension of the constitution and rule by decree. Hindenburg, recalling that Schleicher himself had warned that the army could not guarantee to control such a situation, rejected this proposal and withdrew his support from Schleicher who was forced to resign as Chancellor.

### Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor

There now existed only two candidates to take over as Chancellor — Papen and Hitler. Papen attempted to win Hitler's support for a new Papen/Hitler government. Hitler however rejected this and demanded that he be Chancellor. At this point the position of the army was critical. They could have vetoed Hitler as Chancellor. Instead they remained neutral. Likewise, Hindenburg overcame his own reservations about the Nazi leader. Thus on 30 January, 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor with Papen as Vice-Chancellor. Although Hitler was in the office of Chancellor there were only two other Nazis in the new Cabinet, a total of 3 out of 11. Papen, Hindenburg, and the leaders of the Nationalist Party which formed the other half of the coalition with the Nazis, gambled that they could control Hitler in office. Likewise the leaders of the army believed that they could turn Hitler out of office at will. They were all tragically mistaken.



The German parliament building, the Reichstag, in flames 27 February 1933



Adolf Hitler (1889–1945)

### The Reichstag fire

Although Hitler had been made Chancellor, real power still eluded him. He did not have a majority in the Reichstag and President Hindenburg had not given him emergency powers. Hitler's opportunity to rectify this and reach for total power came on 27 February, 1933, when the Reichstag building was burnt down. (It is generally assumed that the fire was lit by the Nazis themselves.) A Dutch Communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, was arrested and accused of the crime. Hitler, with the backing of the Cabinet, asked the President for emergency powers. These powers were granted on 28 February. Civil liberties were suspended and the government was authorized to make arrests to guard against communist subversion.

### Hitler consolidates power

A great terror now descended on Germany as Nazi stormtroopers arrested and imprisoned all those who posed any opposition to the Nazi dictatorship. These included Communists, Socialists and any others judged to be a threat. Amidst this upheaval, elections were held on 5 March, 1933. Hitler hoped to achieve an absolute majority in the Reichstag; to ensure this, his supporters terrorised the country, breaking up meetings held by other parties and murdering opposition spokesmen. Nevertheless, the election results were a disappointment for the Nazis, with 56% of the votes going to other parties. However, with the backing of the Nationalist Party the Nazis achieved a bare majority in the new Reichstag.

With this support and the emergency powers of 28 February, Hitler pressured the Reichstag into passing legislation known as the Enabling Act on 23 March, 1933. The Enabling Act gave the Cabinet a range of legislative and budgetary powers and the authority to suspend the constitution, for a period of four years. Only the Socialists opposed this legislation in the Reichstag. The Communists had been banned from taking their seats.

Armed with these powers, Hitler was able to complete the process of becoming dictator of Germany. He proceeded to systematically smash all the remaining independent institutions within Germany. Thus, during March and April 1933, the German state governments were dismissed and replaced by Reich governors who were responsible to Hitler. The process of centralising political power in Germany was completed in January 1934, when all of the state assemblies were abolished and their powers transferred to the central government.

Similarly all political parties, other than the National Socialist Party, were abolished. The Communist Party was the first to go, being outlawed in February 1933. In June 1933, the Social Democratic Party was abolished and in July the Catholic parties. All other parties including the Centre Party and the Nationalists met the same fate. The culmination of this process came on 14 July, 1933, when the National Socialist Party was proclaimed the only political party in Germany. It became illegal to attempt to found other parties.

During May and June 1933, Hitler moved to crush the independent trade union movement. Union leaders were arrested, union property confiscated and their funds seized. A new organization called the Labour Front, run by the Nazis, was established to take the place of the old trade unions.

Hitler next acted against the Civil Service. All those members of the Civil Service suspected of disloyalty to the new regime or who posed a future threat were

dismissed. Furthermore, all teachers in universities and schools had to swear an oath of loyalty to Hitler. In this way the Civil Service, the universities and schools were purged by the Nazis.

In order to control information, censorship of the press was introduced on 4 October, 1933, when new Reich Press Laws were proclaimed. Even in the schools, the content of courses and textbooks was controlled by the Nazis.

### 'Night of the Long Knives'

In order to consolidate his personal position Hitler moved ruthlessly against his rivals within the Nazi Party. On 30 June, 1934, Hitler personally supervised the murder of those who might pose a challenge to his position. This bloodletting became known as the Night of the Long Knives. Ernst Röhm, the leader of the S.A. was shot and the S.A. was subsequently purged and reorganized. Also eliminated on this occasion was General von Schleicher who had foolishly talked about organising a new coalition to replace Hitler. The Night of the Long Knives was an exercise in selective terror designed to liquidate Hitler's immediate rivals and intimidate all others into submission.

### Hitler becomes dictator

When President Hindenburg died on 2 August, 1934, Hitler used the occasion to grab total power. He combined the office of chancellor and president and proclaimed himself Fuehrer (Leader), Reich Chancellor, and Commander-in-Chief of the army. All officers and men of the German army were now made to take a special oath of allegiance pledging unconditional obedience to Hitler. Adolf Hitler was now dictator of Germany.

### Nazi economic policy

Hitler and the Nazis had been able to come to power in Germany largely because the Great Depression had caused the collapse of the German economy and mass unemployment. As a result the German people had lost faith in the democratic system and looked to radical alternatives such as Nazism for solutions to their problems. Once they took power, the Nazis acted immediately to create jobs and re-establish prosperity, so as to ensure both popular support for the new regime and to gain the cooperation of Germany's businessmen and industrialists.

Hitler knew nothing of economics and left the task of economic revitalization to his Minister for Economics, Dr Hjalmar Schacht. Schacht was a gifted economist who used the general upturn in the world economy, tight foreign exchange policies, an extensive public works program and finally Hitler's re-armament program to reduce unemployment and stimulate the economy. His achievement was formidable. Under Schacht's direction the German Gross National Product grew 102% between 1932 and 1937. Unemployment fell dramatically, from 6 million when Hitler became Chancellor in January 1933 to less than 2 million by mid-1935. By 1939, Germany had a labour shortage. Schacht was replaced in 1936 by General Thomas who, on Hitler's instructions, introduced a four-year plan aimed at encouraging German economic self-sufficiency and to prepare the economy for war.

### The Nazi police state

Nazi Germany was a police state. In order to exercise total control over the German people, the Nazis established both a Ministry of Propaganda to control information, and special police agencies to track down and deal with dissenters.

The Ministry of Propaganda and People's Enlightenment was headed by Dr Joseph Goebbels. Goebbels controlled all German radio and exercised tight political censorship of newspapers, books and films. Newspapers which did not toe the line were shut down, and books by authors who were Jewish, were critical of Nazism, or for some other reason were not approved of, were burnt in spectacular public ceremonies.

In order to maintain tight control over the German population, the Nazis established two terror organizations, the S.S. and the Gestapo. The S.S. (Schutz Staffeln), which was an elite party organization, came to prominence after the purge against the S.A. in 1934. By 1939 there were 240 000 S.S. troops, who, among other duties, manned the concentration camps which had been established within Germany to imprison the opponents of the Nazi regime. Another even more dreaded organization established to deal with dissent was the Gestapo or secret police. The Gestapo tracked down, tortured, murdered or imprisoned all those deemed to be enemies of the State. Both of these terror organizations, the S.S. and the Gestapo, were controlled by Heinrich Himmler who eventually brought all German police organizations under his charge with the establishment of the Reich Security Main Office.

### Nazi racial theory

Hitler and the Nazi party preached the idea of the superiority of the so-called Aryan race. Hitler believed that Germans and other Northern European people were what he called 'Aryan' or 'Nordic' and thus racially superior to all other peoples. In Hitler's view the Aryans had given the world its highest form of culture and civilization, and were destined to rule over lesser peoples.

While Hitler was contemptuous of all non-Aryan people — Slavs, Latins, Negroes and Asians — his one obsessive hate, however, was for Jews. Once in power Hitler, began a systematic persecution of Jews. The first action taken against the Jews occurred in April, 1933, two months after Hitler took power, when a boycott of all Jewish shops in Germany was organized by the Nazis. Next Jews were dismissed from all public positions. By 1938 Jews were forbidden to work as doctors, lawyers, public servants, teachers, academics, stock brokers or farmers. They were often refused service in German shops and were the victims of constant harassment and ridicule.

Discrimination against Jews was formalized in September 1935 when the Nuremberg Laws were proclaimed 'for the protection of the racial purity of the state'. Jews were stripped of their rights as German citizens and marriage between Jews and Aryans was forbidden.

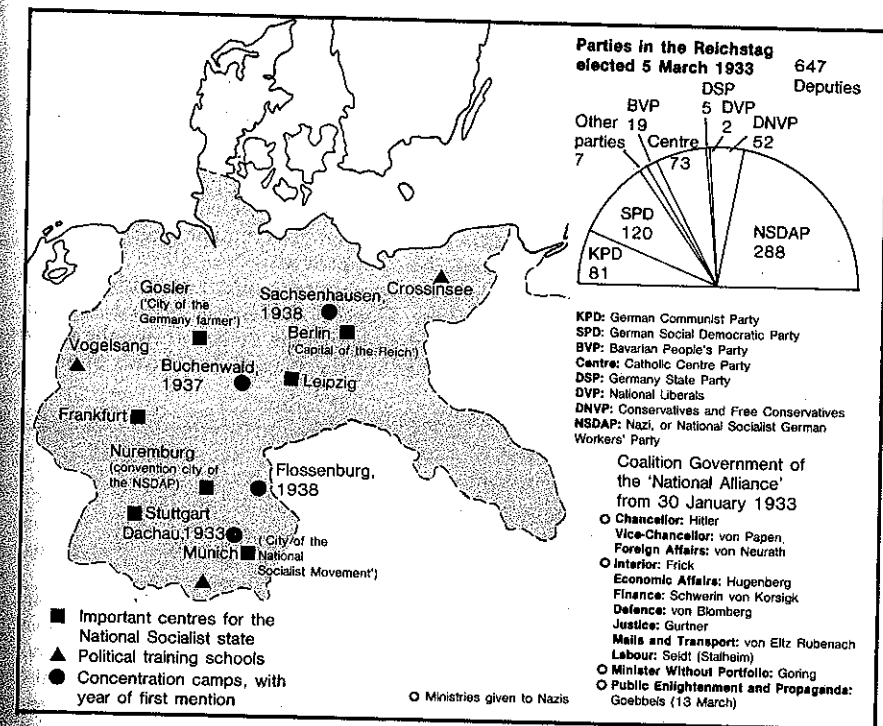
The ultimate attack on the Jews came on 10 November, 1938, during the so-called 'Crystal Night'. In response to the assassination of an official of the German Embassy in Paris by a young Jew a few days earlier, the S.A. and S.S. were at loose to loot and smash Jewish property throughout Germany. Over 7000 Jewish shops were looted, 191 synagogues were burnt down and 20 000 Jews were

arrested. The event was known as 'Crystal Night' because there was so much broken glass in the streets after the looting and fire bombing that the glass looked like crystal. By 1939 over half of the Jews in Germany had fled abroad. Of those who remained most were killed in the concentration camps during the Second World War.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 Name the man who replaced Herman Mueller as Chancellor in March 1930.
- 2 How many Nazis were elected to the Reichstag at the elections of 14 September, 1930?
- 3 Who was re-elected Reich President in 1932?
- 4 Which organization did Chancellor Bruening attempt to suppress in April 1932?
- 5 What drastic move did Chancellor Papen want President Hindenburg to introduce after the November 1932 elections?
- 6 Name the army general who became Chancellor in December 1932.
- 7 On what date did Adolf Hitler become Chancellor?
- 8 Which Berlin building burnt down on 27 February, 1933?
- 9 What piece of legislation was passed by the Reichstag on March 23, 1933?
- 10 Which party was proclaimed the only political party in Germany on 14 July, 1933?
- 11 Name the leader of the S.A. who was shot on the 'Night of the Long Knives'.
- 12 What titles did Adolf Hitler assume in August 1934 after the death of President Hindenburg?
- 13 Who was the Minister of Economics appointed by Hitler to revitalize the German economy when the Nazis came to power?
- 14 List the two terror organizations established by the Nazis in order to maintain tight control over the German population.
- 15 Which laws were introduced in September 1935 to formalize discrimination against the Jews in Germany?

## MAP QUESTIONS



Map 23 Hitler's Germany

- 1 Which ministries in the coalition government formed on 30 January, 1933, did the Nazis take over? Who was appointed to these ministries?
- 2 How many seats did the N.S.D.A.P. (Nazi) Party have in the Reichstag elected on 5 March, 1933?
- 3 Name the locations of the two political training schools established by the Nazis.
- 4 What title did the Nazis give the following cities?  
Berlin  
Munich  
Nuremberg
- 5 List the four concentration camps established by the Nazis in Germany after they came to power. Give the year in which each camp was established.



## INVESTIGATING HISTORY

### Document One: Schleicher asks Papen to become Chancellor

On 30 May, 1932, President Hindenburg dismissed Brüning as chancellor and a new cabinet headed by Baron Franz von Papen took over the government. The Papen cabinet was formed under the guidance of General Kurt von Schleicher. As the political crisis of Weimar Germany had worsened, the army had come to play a more prominent role in political life, advising the President which politicians were acceptable as chancellor, and, in the case of the Papen government, presenting the new chancellor with a list of cabinet appointees approved by the army.

Document One is an extract from Papen's autobiography, *Memoirs*, published in 1952. In this passage Papen describes how General Schleicher invited him to become chancellor. The document explains why neither the President nor the army were willing to support Brüning after his ban on the Nazi S.A. (Brown Shirts).

Read the document and answer the questions which follow.

... on 26 May 1932 I received a telephone call from General von Schleicher, who asked me to come to Berlin on an urgent matter. I arrived the next day without any idea of what was going on, and on the 28th I called on him at his office. He gave me a general survey of the political situation, described the crisis within the cabinet, and told me that it was the President's wish to form a cabinet of experts, independent of the political parties. It had become technically impossible to form a parliamentary cabinet, because no combination could command a majority. The sole remaining constitutional solution was the formation of a presidential cabinet by the chief of State. Schleicher gave me a colourful description of the impossibility of relying further on Brüning. His unilateral ban on the Brown Shirts had placed the National Socialists even more sharply in opposition, and had at the same time put the President in an embarrassing situation constitutionally *vis-à-vis* the other parties. He no longer considered it possible to combat a party as strong as the Nazis by negative means, which had only resulted in the steady and threatening growth of their power. The Nazis claimed to be actuated by

patriotic motives, for which a great many Germans found sympathy, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to prevent the younger Reichswehr officers from being attracted by their ideas.

Brüning had insisted, so Schleicher told me, that he would never sit at the same table with National Socialists. But there was no way of obtaining their cooperation in the affairs of government if they were driven further and further into opposition and exposed to increasingly radical influences. Some solution had to be found. Hindenburg was also perturbed at the manner in which Brüning's emergency financial decrees were depressing the standard of living of those dependent on pensions and investment incomes. The economic crisis could only be solved by much more positive methods. The President was no longer convinced that the Chancellor's policies would protect the authority of the State and the country's economy from complete breakdown.

Schleicher left me in no doubt that he was acting as spokesman for the army, the only stable organization remaining in the State, preserved intact and free of party political strife by von Seeckt and his successors. In

the present parliamentary crisis, this instrument of law and order could only be spared from intervention in the civil war that threatened, if an authoritarian cabinet were to replace the tottering party system. This was a theme we had often discussed ...

I therefore found myself in complete agreement with Schleicher's train of thought

... He [Schleicher] then turned the conversation to the subject of who could lead the new cabinet. We discussed various names and he asked for my opinion. There had been nothing out of the ordinary in our conversation so far, but to my amazement Schleicher now suggested that I should take over this task myself.

- 1 Why had it become technically impossible to form a parliamentary cabinet?
- 2 Why did Schleicher believe it was impossible to rely further on Brüning?
- 3 What was Brüning's attitude to sharing government with the Nazis?
- 4 What result of Brüning's emergency financial decrees caused Hindenburg to be perturbed?
- 5 How did Schleicher think the army could be spared intervention in a civil war?

### Briefly

*What role did the German army and its spokesman, General von Schleicher, play in German political affairs between the fall of Chancellor Hermann Müller's coalition government in 1930 and the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor in January 1933?*



Hitler meeting Paul Ludwig von Hindenburg, the hero of the First World War who was President from 1925 until his death in 1934.

### The Cartoonist's View: 'Popular Enthusiasm'

In this cartoon, 'Popular Enthusiasm', the cartoonist Fulk suggests that terror tactics were used by Hitler and the Nazis to muster support amongst the public.

Study the cartoon and answer the questions which follow.



- 1 In what way are the Nazis in this cartoon ensuring that the spectators respond correctly to their parade?
- 2 With which group of Nazis are the spectators most concerned?
- 3 How does the cartoonist contrast the Nazis with the spectators?

#### Briefly

*What elections were held in Germany between September 1930 and March 1933? How did electoral support for the Nazi Party change during this period?*

### Document Two: 'The Brown Terror'

Sir John Wheeler-Bennett was an English historian who spent the early 1930s in Germany, during which time he observed the death of the Republic and the rise of the Nazis. He was well connected with the German political elite and counted among his friends many of the leading members of the Republic. Wheeler-Bennett left Germany in 1934 shortly before the Night of the Long Knives and so escaped

with his life. His name was on the death list of those enemies of the Nazis to be executed on that night.

In his autobiographical account of his experiences in Europe between the wars, *Knaves, Fools and Heroes*, published in 1974, Wheeler-Bennett gave an insight into Germany as Hitler took power. In this extract from his book, Wheeler-Bennett explains how Hitler won the support of many ordinary decent Germans and gives an account of life under a totalitarian regime. Fränzchen, to whom Wheeler-Bennett refers, was Franz von Papen.

Read the document and answer the questions which follow.

There were many, however, among one's friends and acquaintances, decent people of good family and upbringing, who for the moment were ready to give their support to the new government. It must be remembered that in the course of the fifteen years which separated that day from the Armistice of 1918, Germany had experienced governments of every kind of political combination and complexion, had suffered a terrifying national bankruptcy, had failed to obtain any major measure of treaty revision that was not already *de facto* and who genuinely believed that economic breakdown, a paralysing inflation and a Communist *Putsch* were both possible, probable and imminent. On these fears and memories Hitler had based his popular appeal. He had something for everyone in his bag of promises, and above all he offered an attractive — almost a romantic — prospect for youth. Where Brüning had called for sacrifices and had gained no concessions in return, Hitler offered pledges and made no concessions.

I offer these facts not in any way as an excuse for my friends' action but as an explanation. 'He's our last chance,' I heard over and over again in their houses when speaking of Hitler. 'We've got to let him have his opportunity. After all the Nazis are a minority in the government; the Old Man and 'Fränzchen' are sound at heart, and, if the worst comes to the worst, the Army can always turn the Nazis out.' It became a self-hypnotic chant which blinded and deafened many to what followed. The tragedy was that in their last argument they were right. The Army could have disposed of Hitler

and the whole Nazi gang at any time during the next four years if they had had the leadership and the intestinal fortitude to do so ...

It was not long before the Brown Terror, in the form of domestic espionage, began to infiltrate the lives of everyone. At first it was pretty amateurish. 'Bugging' — now a household word — was still in its comparative infancy forty years ago, and when one made a call from a telephone box one was aware of a pause and then a click as the monitoring record was turned on. This technique soon improved, however, and one dreaded the appearance of a telephone maintenance man who would suddenly arrive to rectify a fault which had never been reported. From then on it was assumed that a microphone had been inserted in the instrument not to record talks made on the telephone itself but conversation in the room in which the telephone was. It was not long before some inventive character discovered that a large tea-cosy placed over the telephone rendered it 'safe' and there was an immediate run on tea-cosies, but the enemy soon counter-attacked. The unwelcome visitor would now be an electrician to see about a short-circuit or some other defect in the lamps in several rooms, and once again the pall of uncertainty and fear would paralyse social life.

The technique of conducting a successful system of terror is to terrorise the maximum number of people with the minimum amount of effort. It is manifestly impossible to listen in to every telephone call or to overhear every conversation, but the art lies

in the use of the spot-check, thereby letting people know when they were *not* being monitored. This itself was unnerving, but so was the increase in the spying by servants on their employers — and even *vice versa*. One closed the door carefully and conducted conversations in a whisper. One

looked over one's shoulder in a public place before speaking. One did not trust the mails. One chose with great care the rendezvous where one met one's friends. No one who has not experienced it can imagine the frighteningly oppressive atmosphere of a totalitarian regime.

- 1 On which fears and memories had Hitler based his popular appeal?
- 2 In the opinion of Wheeler-Bennett's friends, who could always turn the Nazis out of office?
- 3 What was the 'Brown Terror'?
- 4 Why did people dread 'the appearance of a telephone maintenance man who would suddenly arrive to rectify a fault which had never been reported'?
- 5 What does Wheeler-Bennett describe as 'the technique of conducting a successful system of terror'?

### Briefly

*How did the Nazis consolidate their position and achieve total power after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in January 1933?*



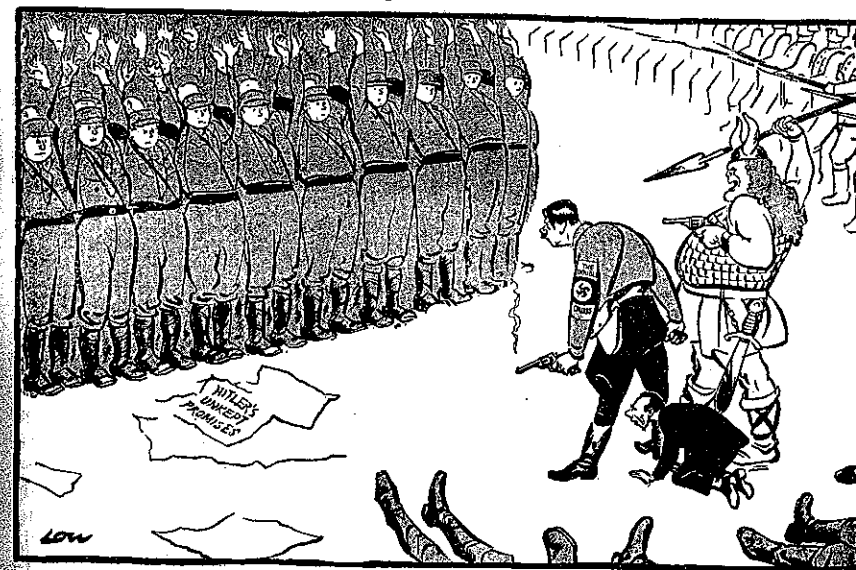
Hitler at the Reichstag. On the centre platform are all the main Nazi leaders.

### The Cartoonist's View: 'They salute with both hands now'

On 30 June, 1934, Hitler, aided by his lieutenants, Goebbels and Goering, eliminated their rivals within the Nazi party, particularly the leaders of the S.A. On the so called 'Night of the Long Knives', Ernst Roehm and other S.A. leaders were shot, along with anyone else deemed to represent a threat to Hitler's leadership, such as the former chancellor General Schleicher.

David Low, the cartoonist for the London *Evening Standard* published this cartoon, 'They salute with both hands now' on 3 July, 1934, as a comment on this event.

Study the cartoon and answer the questions which follow.



They salute with both hands now. Hitler Goebbels Goering

- 1 What has happened to the people whose feet can be seen in the foreground?
- 2 How does Low depict Hitler in this cartoon?
- 3 What does Low mean by 'They salute with both hands now'?

### Briefly

*In what way did Hitler move to eliminate his political rivals during 1933 and 1934? Mention his moves against other political parties as well as his actions against rivals within the Nazi party itself.*

## Document Three: 'like being inside a cathedral of ice'

The most spectacular ceremonial occasions observed by the Nazis were the mass party rallies held at Nuremberg. These rallies were carefully stage-managed to create the maximum effect and were designed by Albert Speer, an architect and one of Hitler's few close friends.

Some sense of the atmosphere Speer created for the Nuremberg rallies was provided by Sir Neville Henderson in his book *Failure of a Mission, Berlin 1937-1939* which was published in 1940. Henderson was a diplomat and served as British Ambassador to Germany between 1937 and 1939. Document Three is an extract from this book.

Read the document and answer the questions which follow

[Anybody] who has not witnessed the various displays given at Nuremberg during the week's rally, or been subjected to the atmosphere thereat, [cannot] be said to be fully acquainted with the Nazi movement in Germany ...

The displays themselves were most impressive. That of the Party leaders (or heads of the Party organisation in towns and villages throughout the country) took place in the evening at eight p.m., in the stadium or Zeppelinfeld. Dressed in their brown shirts, these 140,000 men were drawn up in six great columns, with passages between them, mostly in the stadium itself, but filling also the tiers of seats surrounding the stadium and facing the elevated platform reserved for the Chancellor, his Ministers and his guards, the massed bands, official guests, and other spectators. Hitler himself arrived at the far entrance of the stadium, some 400 yards from the platform, and, accompanied by several hundred of his followers, marched on foot up the central passage to his appointed place. His arrival was theatrically notified by the sudden turning into the air of the 300 or more searchlights with which the stadium was surrounded. The blue-

tinged light from these met thousands of feet up in the sky at the top to make a kind of square roof, to which a chance cloud gave added realism. The effect, which was both solemn and beautiful, was like being inside a cathedral of ice. At the word of command the standard-bearers then advanced from out of sight at the far end, up the main lane, and over the further tiers and up the four side lanes. A certain proportion of these standards had electric lights on their shafts, and the spectacle of these five rivers of red and gold rippling forward under the dome of blue light, in complete silence, through the massed formations of brownshirts, was indescribably picturesque. I had spent six years in St. Petersburg before the war in the best days of the old Russian ballet, but for grandiose beauty I have never seen a ballet to compare with it. The German, who has a highly developed herd instinct, is perfectly happy when he is wearing a uniform, marching in step, and singing a chorus, and the Nazi revolution has certainly known how to appeal to these instincts in his nature. As a display of aggregate strength it was ominous; as a triumph of mass organisation combined with beauty it was superb.

- 1 Over what period of time did a Nuremberg rally last?
- 2 How many men 'were drawn up in six great columns' at the display of the Party leaders?
- 3 For whom was the elevated platform reserved?

4 In what way was the arrival of Hitler notified?

5 In Henderson's view, what aspect of the German character did the Nazi revolution take advantage of in organizing rallies such as those staged at Nuremberg?

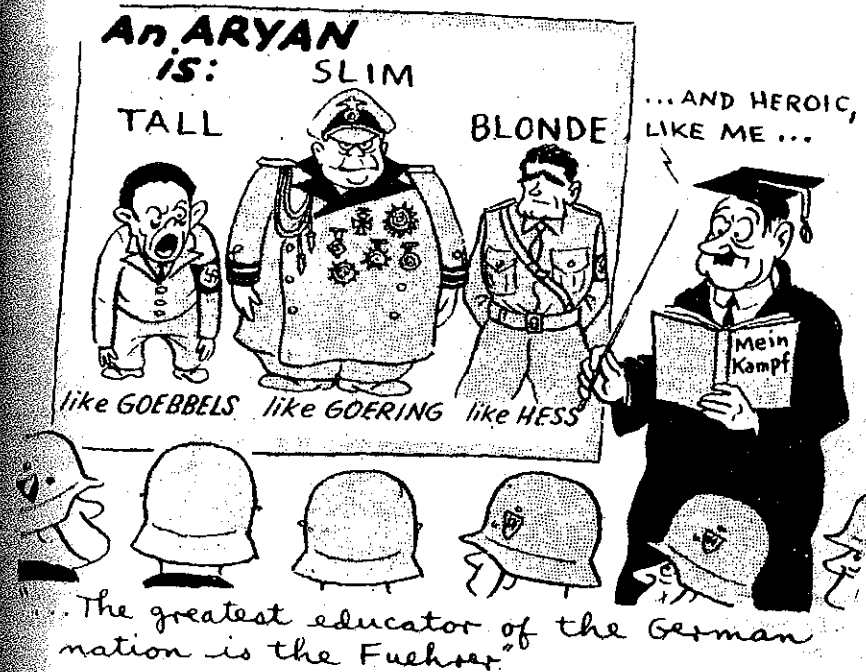
## Briefly

How did the Nazis use mass displays such as the Nuremberg rallies to gain popular support for their movement and policies?

## The Cartoonist's View: 'An Aryan is ...'

The cartoon 'An Aryan is ...' was published in 1936 and is a comment on the fact that the Nazi leadership did not itself possess the physical attributes claimed for the so-called Aryan race, that is, tall, slender and blond. Joseph Goebbels, the Propaganda Minister was very short, Goering, the Air Minister was very fat and Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy, had very thick dark hair and bushy black eyebrows. Hitler himself possessed no physical distinction.

Study the cartoon and answer the questions which follow.





- 1 Who is giving the lesson to explain what an Aryan is?
- 2 With what animal does the cartoonist compare Goebbels?
- 3 How does the cartoonist represent the teacher and his racial ideas?

### Briefly

*Explain the racial doctrine preached by Hitler and the Nazis.*

#### Document Four: 'The fight for the mind of youth starts in the cradle'

In order to consolidate their rule in Germany the Nazis made every effort to capture the loyalty of German youth. In Document Four Stephen Roberts, an Australian observer of Nazi Germany, describes how this was done.

Roberts was a Professor of Contemporary History who lived in Europe between 1935 and 1937. He travelled widely through Germany and met Hitler personally. These observations on Hitler's Germany come from Roberts' book *The House That Hitler Built* published in 1937.

Read the document and answer the questions which follow.

The fight for the mind of youth starts in the cradle. The baby's earliest fairy tales must be in accordance with Nazi ideas. The Führer is 'the man sent from Heaven', who triumphed over some evil people called the Allies and who started a long fight to kill the bad ogre — the Bolshevik — who is for ever trying to eat up honest little German children.

At the age of ten, each little boy gets a brown shirt ... Henceforth he belongs to the 'Young Folk'. The little girl will join the 'Union of German Maidens' ... Little boy and girl alike are pledged to sacrifice everything for the Führer and are taught that he is everything and themselves nothing. After four years of this, the boy of fourteen joins the Hitler Youth, the outward symbol of his promotion being the change to brown trousers and the presentation of a red swastika arm-band as worn by adult members of the Brownshirt organization. Henceforth he is a Storm Trooper in miniature ...

When grown up, the boy goes to camp for six months, compulsory labour service, ... in the fields. This is followed by two years' service in the army as a conscript, but, by the time the army gets hold of him, he is saturated with Nazi ideology ... After leaving the army, our young man may become a member of the Brown or Black-shirts, first on the active list and later with the reserves ...

It would be foolish to underestimate the enthusiasm of young Germany for their Führer. All other interests are disappearing, and it would be misleading to think that the religious bodies ... are holding their own with the children. Again and again in Germany, even in Catholic Bavaria and the Black Forest, I found cases of children whose Roman Catholic parents tried to keep them in the few struggling Church societies that still exist for children. In every case the children wanted to join the Hitler Jugend. The brown shirt or drab blouse of Hitler

won every time; the children wanted to follow the drums and the fifes of their play-fellows' bands and, as they saw it, be normal. To be outside Hitler's organization was the worst form of punishment.

Hitler has captured the children heart and soul, and it is one of the oldest adages of dictatorship that he who has control of the elementary schools for five years is established in power for ever ...

Their attitude of mind is absolutely uncritical. They do not see in Hitler a statesman with good and bad points; to them he is

more than a demigod. Time out of number they answered my queries why they believed or did so-and-so by the reply: 'Because the Führer wills it!'

... The children of Germany believe that right and wrong are as distinct as black and white. Germany is always right, the rest of the world always wrong, and as for the Russians, they are literally devils from hell. It was this utter lack of any objective or critical attitude on the part of youth, even with university students, that made me fear most for the future of Germany.

- 1 Which organization did boys join at the age of ten? Which organization did girls join?
- 2 At what age did boys join the Hitler Youth?
- 3 Which organization could young men join after they left the army?
- 4 What does Roberts describe as 'one of the oldest adages of dictatorship'?
- 5 What made Roberts 'fear most for the future of Germany'?

### Briefly

*By what means did the Nazis endeavour to win the loyalty of German youth for their cause?*



The Nazis were convinced of the need to capture the hearts and minds of German youth. This was done through organisations like 'Hitler Youth'.

**The Cartoonist's View: 'Art has become very spontaneous and sincere under the supervision of National Socialism'**

The Nazis regulated all aspects of German life, including art. The title of this cartoon is taken from a declaration made by Joseph Goebbels, the Minister for Propaganda. In this work the cartoonist Stephen Roth is commenting on both the control of German art and the way it was achieved. Those artists who produced works not approved of by the Nazis were visited by 'aesthetic officials' and forced to conform to the Nazi concept of art.

In this cartoon the artist is being guided in his work by Heinrich Himmler who is dressed in the black uniform of the S.S.

Study the cartoon and answer the questions which follow.



Art has become very spontaneous and sincere under the supervision of National Socialism.

- 1 What method of persuasion is Himmler prepared to use to ensure that the artist produces the right kind of art?
- 2 Who does the cartoonist suggest is really doing the painting in this cartoon? How does he suggest it?
- 3 In the cartoonist's opinion, what has happened to German art under the Nazis?

**Briefly**

*How did the Nazis regulate artistic life in Germany after they came to power?*

**Document Five: 'Crystal Night'**

The tenth of November, 1938, was Crystal Night, the occasion on which the Nazis orchestrated an attack on Jews throughout Germany, arresting 20 000 and burning and looting Jewish property and synagogues.

Document Five is an account by a Jewish man who was arrested and sent to a concentration camp on Crystal Night.

Read the document and answer the questions which follow.

On November 10, 1938 ... a man from the Gestapo ... who, incidentally, was very courteous, told me that he had orders to arrest me. ... He could give me no reason, but thought I would be back home late in the evening. ... In the courtyard of the police headquarters stood hundreds of people, all Jews. Soon we were put in lorries and driven away. No one knew where to. After a lengthy journey through the northern suburbs of Berlin we arrived at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. As we were made to jump from the trucks in the dark, we were met by S.S. men with blows to the head, kicks, and jabs with their rifle-butts.

We stood the whole night on the huge parade ground. No one was allowed to break rank. More truck loads arrived every few minutes. In the early hours of the morning we were led into a barrack block and ordered to strip. Money and valuables were taken away though we got receipts for them. Stripped bare, we went into the next room, where our heads were shorn. In a third room we were issued with light underwear as well as with a blue and white striped canvas uniform. ...

While we were standing there the S.S. men amused themselves by punching or kicking us at will. ...

- 1 Who arrested the writer on 10 November, 1938?
- 2 Name the concentration camp to which those who had been arrested were taken?
- 3 What did the S.S. men do to the prisoners as they jumped from the trucks?
- 4 Where did the prisoners spend the night?
- 5 What type of uniform were the prisoners issued with?

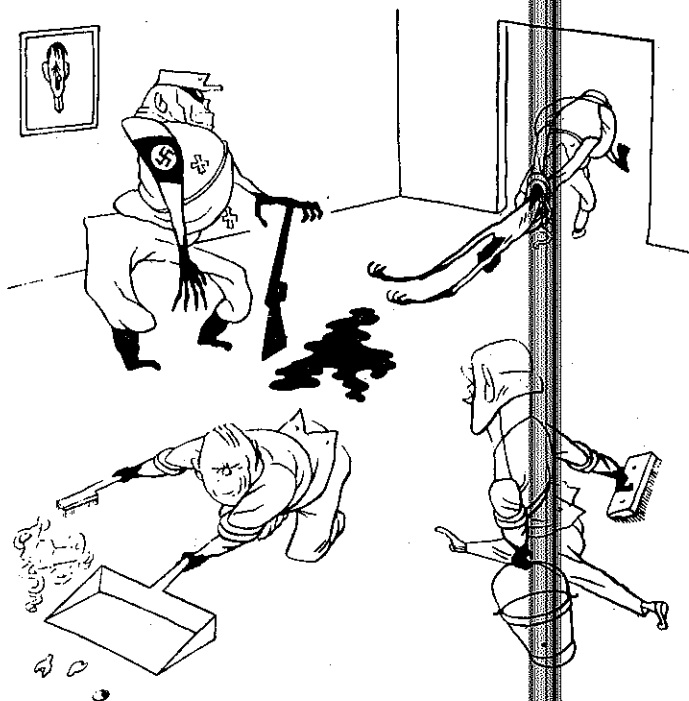
**Briefly**

*Explain what happened to Jews in Germany under the Nazis.*

### The Cartoonist's View: 'Germany, the tidiest country in the world'

Immediately after they took power in Germany the Nazis began to ruthlessly suppress all opposition to their rule. In this cartoon, 'Germany, the tidiest country in the world', the Czech cartoonist Frantisek Bidlo comments on the fate of those who dared to oppose Nazism.

Study the cartoon and answer the questions which follow.



- 1 What has happened to the man who is being dragged away?
- 2 How does the cartoonist portray the Nazi stormtrooper featured in this cartoon?
- 3 How are the men in the foreground reacting to what has happened?

#### Briefly

*What terror organizations did the Nazis establish in order to suppress opposition to their rule? Who led these organizations and what type of activities were they engaged in?*

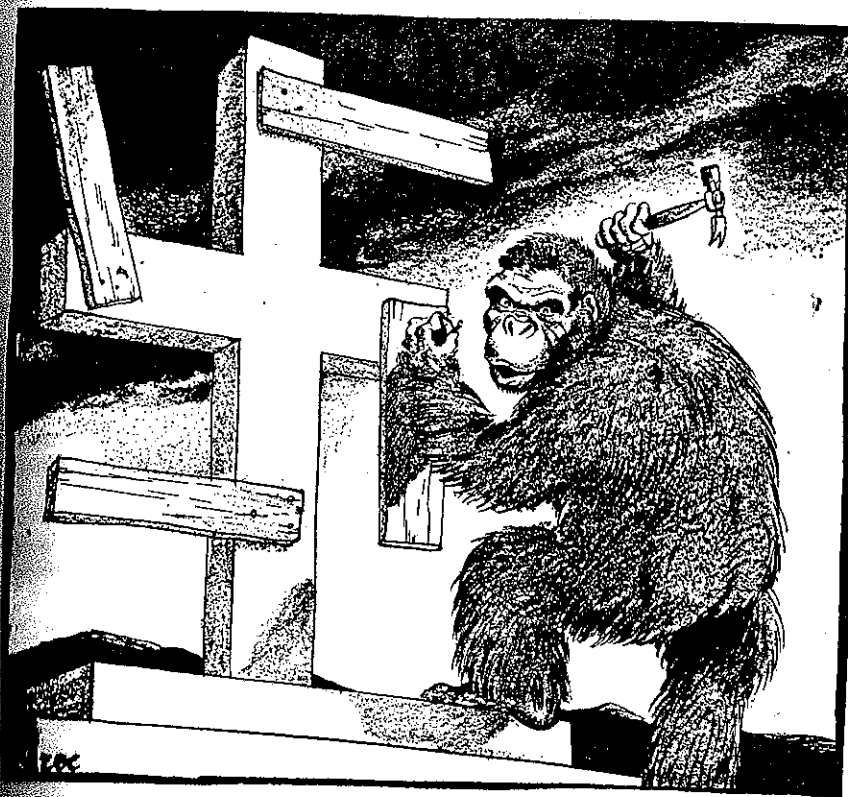
### The Cartoonist's View: 'The new Christianity, See? 100% Aryan'

The Nazi party realised that Christianity represented a threat to their total control of the German people and attacked those churches and churchmen who would not co-operate with them. The Catholic church was openly persecuted, its publications banned, its youth league dissolved, and the leader of the organization, Catholic Action, murdered.

In July 1933 the Nazis replaced the established Protestant churches with their own 'Reich church'. Many protestant clergy, led by Pastor Niemoller rejected the 'Reich Church' and formed the independent Confessing Church in 1934. This was not tolerated for long and in 1937 Pastor Niemoller and 806 other leaders of the Confessing Church were sent to the concentration camps.

This cartoon by Philip Zec was published in the London *Daily Mirror*, 16 January, 1941. The cartoon comments on what the Nazis were doing to Christianity as well as their attempt to ensure that German Christians were racially pure.

Study the cartoon and answer the questions which follow.



- 1 What is happening to the Christian cross in this cartoon?
- 2 How does the cartoonist portray the Nazis who are responsible for attacks on Christianity?
- 3 What is the cartoonist's view of Germany's new Christianity?

### Briefly

*After the Nazis took power in 1933, what was their policy towards the Christian churches in Germany?*

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

### Revision Essay

How did the Nazis come to power in Germany in 1933?

### Research Essay

Explain the domestic policies introduced by the Nazis after they came to power in Germany?

# 20

## THE ORIGINS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR — EUROPE

Hitler's early foreign policy had three broad objectives. Firstly, Germany had to withdraw from the diplomatic commitments entered into by the Weimar government. Secondly, Germany needed to organise and begin to arm herself in preparation for war. Thirdly, the western powers had to be tested to gauge their willingness to resist an expansionist German foreign policy.

### 1933: Germany withdraws from the Geneva Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations

Disarmament negotiations between the Weimar government and the western powers had begun at Geneva in 1932 and had achieved for Germany the right to have equal status of armaments with both Britain and France. These agreements however did not suit the new Nazi regime. Hitler wished to expand the German armed forces without any external controls or restrictions. Thus, he demanded that all controls on German arms be lifted. When the French government rejected this proposal, Hitler withdrew from both the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations in October 1933.

In order to lull the western powers into a sense of complacency about these developments, Hitler declared that Germany would abide by any mutual agreements reached with the other powers on the elimination of offensive weapons. Furthermore, he stated that he was prepared to enter into pacts of friendship with the other powers.

Europe was eager to take Hitler at his word and European leaders ignored his avoidance of concrete proposals aimed at a broadly based security system for Europe. Instead, some entered into their own agreements with Germany.

Thus, in January 1934, Poland concluded a non-aggression pact with Germany which gave Hitler the advantage of a secure eastern frontier while he prepared to begin his expansionist foreign policy in the west.